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**Local Language Book Initiative Spurs South African
Children's Literacy**



From left: USAID director, Carleene Dei, U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission, Donald Teitelbaum, UTSA, Julius Gribou and Project Director, Dr. Misty Sailors introduces the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor to the Ithuba project

MIDRAND – Minister of Education Naledi Pandor and American Deputy Chief of Mission Don Teitelbaum today launched an American-South African partnership to develop children's books in local South African languages. The three-year, R21.6 million (US\$1=R7.2) program is funded by the U.S. President's Africa Education Initiative, designed to improve educational opportunities for Africa's children. Today's program commemorates World Literacy Month. 600,000 copies of new books and learning materials for 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students will be published through the ITHUBA Writing Project.

Cooperating partners include the National Department of Education, USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development), the University of Texas-San Antonio and South African non-governmental organizations READ and the Molteno Project.

American Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. Don Teitelbaum, presented the first 16 storybooks to Minister Pandor in front of an audience of children and educators at the Dr. Mathole Motshekga Primary School in

Midrand's Rabie Ridge. Teitelbaum said, "Developing and producing books and educational resources for primary school learners in science, mathematics and health education are key objectives of the project. South Africans are being trained to prepare materials in all 11 official languages."

The South African isiZulu word—ITHUBA—means "opportunities." The home-language storybooks will feature 120 titles and focus on the country's most marginalized languages: SiSwati, Ndebele, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. Minister Pandor has said it is a "well-established fact that home language, if correctly used, can be a powerful vehicle for developing foundational concepts for future learning."

Dr. Mathole Motshekga Primary School principal, Tabitha Kulima, said, "These new books will be good because they are written by people who know the local environment, so the material is relevant to our children's situations." The school is composed of 22 portable units and achieved "no-fee" status last year. It employs 37 teachers working with 1,400 students aged 6 to 13, including many orphans from nearby informal settlements. The ITHUBA Writing Project will help make sure that they and others across the country become fully literate.



One of the Authors shows off the Ithuba books



*Further information is available from Reverie Zurba, USAID: (012) 452-2000
Lizelle Langford, READ: (083) 263-5723
Lunga Ngqengelele, Department of Education: (082) 566-0446*